

NEW JERSEY

2000-2001

Guidelines and
Application

BEST

PRACTICES

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000

The Best Practices application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page and page 2, if applicable.

Category	<u>Special Education</u>	(Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	<u>That's Life!</u>	
Number of Schools with Practice	<u>1</u>	(If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	<u>Atlantic</u>		
District (Proper Name)	<u>Linwood Public Schools</u>		
Address	<u>Belhaven School</u>		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	<u>Belhaven Avenue</u>		
	City	<u>Linwood</u>	08221 Zip Code
Telephone	609-926-6703 Fax 609-926-6705 Email MargaretDoran@		
Chief School Administrator	<u>Ralph A. Schiavo, Jr.</u> linwoodschoools.org		
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	<u>Belhaven School</u>		
Address	<u>Belhaven Avenue</u>		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	City	<u>Linwood</u>	08221 Zip Code
Telephone	609-926-6700 Fax 609-926-6705 Email MargaretDoran@		
Principal	<u>Frank Rudnesky</u> linwoodschoools.org		
Program Developer(s)	<u>Christine Ruth</u>		
Application Prepared By	<u>Christine Ruth</u>		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature			

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY	
Approved: <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	County Superintendent's Signature <u>Munt May</u>

**NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2000-2001 APPLICATION**

Application Requirements: Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.

1. **RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS and ACCURATE.** No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements
2. **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4.** Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
3. Application must be **keyboarded on 8 ½" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used.** (This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.)
4. **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to all the statements below must be **no more than a total of four pages.** Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for accuracy and clarity.
5. **The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page.** Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
6. **The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.**
7. **The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by November 27, 2000, with the Itemized List of District Applications form.** Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name
Elementary School		That's Life!
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle School	5-8	Number of Schools with Practice <u>1</u>
Junior High School		Number of Districts with Practice <u>1</u>
High School		Location <input type="checkbox"/> Urban/City <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban With Urban Characteristics
Other: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town <input type="checkbox"/> Rural

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages
	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement	
	(family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

Transition planning should begin in middle school! Students with learning disabilities need hands-on, systematic instruction in order to make a successful transition from middle school to high-school and from high-school to life. “That’s Life!” is a program that develops academic and life skills across all disciplines for students in the self-contained Multiple Disabilities Class. Three domains have been identified through research as major indicators of students’ further success in life as well as in school: workplace readiness/self-advocacy skills, social skills, and reading. The self-contained multiple disabilities class in our school focuses on strengthening these areas throughout the curriculum.

Objectives:

The objectives of “That’s Life” are as follows:

- To develop social interaction skills.
- To increase reading levels.
- To build critical reading skills through use of real-life materials.
- To prepare students for the workplace by providing them with hands-on practice.
- To increase student knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses and enable them to articulate their needs in various settings.

Innovation and Achievement:

“That’s Life!” takes self-contained students from the beginning of fifth grade up through eighth grade graduation. The workplace-readiness piece encourages independence, self-confidence and the acquisition of specific skills. For example:

- Students run a weekly “Bagel Cart” for teachers and staff. They plan, order, stock and staff the cart. The students sell bagels, coffee, juice, muffins and fruit. Over six hundred dollars has been raised since the Bagel Cart’s inception last year. The money is deposited into their own savings account. Profits are used as charitable donations and to supplement class trips, including a visit to a local nursing home.
- Students are provided with daily practice in workplace readiness skills. They use menus, bus schedules, movie listings and newspapers to develop decision-making skills. Students are constantly required to use critical thinking and problem solving skills. They write math problems for each other, perform inquiry-based science experiments and explore research questions on the Internet.
- Eighth grade students are involved in the planning and implementation of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). They are considered members of the IEP team. They are responsible for assessing their strengths and weaknesses and planning goals for their future.

Social skills and positive self-esteem are necessary for future success. Students practice these skills in the following ways:

- Students compose a class mission each year and display it in front of the classroom. Individual goals are posted around the mission and are revised as they are accomplished.
- Social skills practice is built into the Social Studies curriculum and student IEP’s. Students role play and practice newly acquired skills daily.

- An “Affirmation Station” is set up in the classroom. Students have opportunities to encourage and acknowledge their classmates’ efforts.

Literacy is a required component of our program to ensure future success. Reading skills are advanced in the following ways:

- Students set a goal in September to read one thousand pages each by June. By the end of the first marking period each student had read at least three-hundred-fifty pages. Several students have already read over six-hundred pages!
- Students are scheduled for “reading appointments” once each week. They read one-on-one with their teacher for fifteen uninterrupted minutes before or after school.
- Reading instruction is infused across the curriculum. Students advance language arts literacy by practicing their skills in all subject areas.

2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standards. Provide an example to substantiate your response.

Workplace Readiness Standards 1, 3 and 4: All students will develop career planning and workplace readiness skills. All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. All students will demonstrate self-management skills. For example:

- Students read want ads online and fill out sample job applications.
- Students compare store prices to find the best deals. They then decide which supplies to purchase for their class Bagel Cart.
- Students troubleshoot problems when working at the Bagel Cart. Among other problems, they determine what to do when the coffee pot overflows, when they run out of napkins or when they are short of change.
- Students set specific long and short-term goals for themselves.
- Students role-play difficult social situations about drinking, drugs, teasing, etc.
- Students cooperate while working at the Bagel Cart. They effectively simulate a work environment.
- Students learn and practice conflict-resolution skills.

Language Arts and Literacy Standards 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5: All students will speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences. All students will read a variety of materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis. All students will view, understand and use nontextual visual information. For example:

- Students take turns being managers of the Bagel Cart. They articulate to their workers what needs to be done and practice giving specific directions.
- Students use newspapers, the Internet, novels, textbooks and student writing in the classroom. They are instructed in decoding, comprehension, vocabulary and spelling daily through direct instruction.
- Students create charts of Bagel Cart profits and debts.
- Students develop comprehension skills through daily read-alouds.
- Students read accounts of other people with disabilities who have become successful.
- Students develop characterization skills through role-play.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

Educational Needs:

“That’s Life!” addresses the needs of students in the Multiple Disabilities Class in our school. The class accommodates up to twelve students, grades five through eight, with mild to moderate disabilities. These disabilities include but are not limited to: specific learning disabilities, communication disabilities, autism and cognitive impairments. Parents, teachers, and Child Study Team members were concerned for these students for the following reasons:

- Three-fourths of the students show evidence of non-verbal learning disabilities. These are manifested as a lack of social skills, poor friendship choices and great difficulties with problem-solving and comprehension tasks.
- Students generally fell further and further behind each year. They did not maintain a year of growth academically for each year in school. Test scores did not show significant learning from year to year.
- The statistics for future success of individuals with learning disabilities are daunting: they post a 35% drop-out from high school and 31% are arrested within three to five years of leaving high-school.
- There are no “proven” successful methods of transition on the market, especially for the middle school: it was necessary to individualize a program for our class.

Assessment:

Several types of assessments were made to evaluate the success of “That’s Life”. Standardized testing showed an average growth of nearly 1 1/2 years in reading skills while in the program:

Student:	Years of Reading Progress in One Year:
A	1.7
B	1.0
C	2.0
D	1.4
E	1.3
F	1.0
G	1.1

In addition, students show excellent progress over several years in the program. For example, two students have advanced 3.8 and 3.6 years respectively over two academic years. This progress is exceptional for students with low-average to below-average abilities.

Additional assessments are made to determine the success of “That’s Life”:

- Students are given a Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) to document their progress in workplace-readiness skills. All students have maintained progress in following directions, establishing eye contact, smiling at their customers and promptness.
- Zero students in the program have been referred to the office for behavior violations.
- Two of the eleven students have been named “Student of the Month” for their grade within the past year.
- One hundred percent of the students are involved in at least one extra-curricular or volunteer activity.

- Students fill out self-evaluations for their work on the Bagel Cart as well as for their participation in role-play activities.
- In general, the classroom maintains a positive atmosphere and is filled with confident, motivated students.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

“That’s Life!” would be easy to replicate in other schools and special-education programs. The program is successful because it is based on solid research and is individualized according to student needs. It follows existing curriculum and is implemented across all subject areas. All of the practices mentioned in “That’s Life!”, including the “Affirmation Station”, class mission, social skills group, reading appointments and one-thousand pages program are no-cost ideas that teachers can use immediately. The most important element in starting a middle-school transition program is a belief in the future of your students. Students, parents, teachers and administrators need a common “mission” that unifies the class and guarantees student achievement. The mission statement written by our class guides us, gives us focus and makes all of us excited and passionate about our goals. Students will succeed in life because they have learned to succeed in school! Our students live this mission statement every day:

I believe I can learn and be a good student.
 I believe I can do my best and fulfill my potential.
 I believe I can do anything if I put my mind to it.
 I believe in teamwork.

Therefore...

I will help my community and friends.
 I will share information and knowledge.
 I will believe in myself.
 I will work hard and have confidence in myself.

I WILL SUCCEED!